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WELCOME

Cool to see you in this issue.

We invite you to join us in our journey to reach the next milestone and see what marvel our new venture has in store for us. Our effort intends to reach out to maximum readers who want to see the movements and developments in the literary world and aspire to write someday too. So, with the hope of giving you a joyous experience in reading, let's begin without delays.

We hope you enjoy this one.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



Mr. Arnab Gantait is a freelance researcher currently employed by Neptune Holidays Private Limited in Kolkata, West Bengal, India, as an Operations Executive. Since 2015, he has been involved in tourist research. In 2014, he earned his PGDM in Tourism and Travel Management from the Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management in Gwalior and also qualified for the UGC-NET. Mr. Arnab has so far published 14 research articles in both international and national referred journals and edited books and has earned 46 citations till date.

His book chapter, "Rural Tourism: Need, Scope, and Challenges in the Indian Context" has been recently cited in the "Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) for Village Kalonda" - a report submitted to the Ministry of Panchayat Raj (GoI). Mr. Gantait is passionate about the academic areas of Responsible Tourism, Rural Tourism, Pro-poor Tourism, and Community Participation in Tourism. His credential may be verified on various research platforms like Google Scholar, SSRN, LinkedIn, Academia, and Research Gate.

Responsible Tourism

The Mantra for Sustainable Tourism Development

In the tourism and hospitality industry, Responsible Tourism has now become a catchphrase. It focuses on maximizing the positive aspects of tourism by raising knowledge about environmental protection and cultivating a deep feeling of responsibility among tourism stakeholders in order to accomplish the holistic and long-term development of tourism destinations (Goodwin, 2011). Responsible tourism is neither a type nor a form of tourism; rather, it is an alternative approach to the tourism progress (Goodwin, 2011), primarily driven by the "Principles of Sustainable Tourism", which is again based on "tourism ethics" and "human rights". This newly emerged tourism approach has various other aspects and it is frequently linked to a wide range of initiatives such as: alternative tourism, ecotourism, geotourism, volunteerism, rural tourism, ethical tourism, fair-trade tourism, and pro-poor tourism (Chettiparamb and Kokkranikal, 2012; Baldo, 2016).

From tourism standpoint, tourist destinations should be developed in such a way that the expectations like: creation of job opportunities for local people of all genders; financial assistance for local entrepreneurs; preservation of local cultural heritages; development of effective visitor management systems to avoid overcrowding; adoption of renewable and green energy systems to combat global warming; implementation of sustainable tourism practices etc. can be met. However, many of these expectations are rarely satisfied in reality. In this context, a "New Tourism" approach i.e. Responsible Tourism (RT) has gained a lot of traction in the past few decades, implying an effective and efficient tourism management strategy with a clear understanding of creating tourist destinations a better place for the locals to live in; while providing an excellent tourist destination for the visitors to enjoy a quality vacation (Greening the WSSD initiative, 2003).

The two main objectives of Responsible Tourism approach are tourist satisfaction and welfare of local community people through active inclusion of tourism stakeholders in a sustainable manner. This newly evolved tourism approach strives to make effective use of tourism earnings for the preservation of the local environment and cultural heritages, which are the key assets of any destination, and heavily reliant on tourism development. According to Sariskumar and Bhavan (2018), the tangible results of responsible tourism also include higher income, dignified jobs, community empowerment, skill development, and capacity building of the local community members, and thus, allowing the host community members to experience a better quality of life.



The salient features of Responsible Tourism highlight a perfect balance between the positive and negative consequences of tourism in order for tourism to emerge as a significant medium for promoting and preserving natural and cultural heritage while also providing long-term benefits for everyone. Furthermore, responsible tourism helps in reducing the cost to the destinations. Otherwise, preserving nature's natural beauty and the environment would become a major challenge. Tourism places especially the eco-fragile destinations must be directed by well-established principles rooted in values, ethics, and morality, as well as local regulations, in order to apply the "Guidelines of Responsible Tourism." There are countless cases around the world, where tourism destinations have witnessed the good effects of tourism on both their people and their environment by following the 'Principal Guidelines of Responsible Tourism.'

The "Triple Bottom Line" concept, which advocates for making tourism more commercially, socially, and environmentally sustainable was introduced in the mid-1990s. Initially this idea was skewed toward environmental concerns, but the addition of a livelihood approach expanded the possibility for examining how tourism growth may help the underprivileged people in tourism locations (Ashley 2000; Goodwin, 1998, Gantait et al., 2021). Since United Nations (UN) adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, tourism has been started recognizing as one of the key players towards poverty alleviation, gender equality, community empowerment, as well as environmental sustainability (Moscardo, 2008; Novelli and Hellwig, 2011). Responsible Tourism also addresses the same shift as it focuses equally on the economy, society and the environment.

Responsible Tourism is all about of providing a better holiday experience for the tourists and at the same time, offering the local residents good business possibilities to enjoy a better quality of life through greater socio-economic benefits and improved natural resource management (Spenceley et al., 2002). Furthermore, Cape Town Declaration (2002) mentioned five core values of Responsible Tourism and argued that these values such as: (1) commitments to mutual respect, (2) diversity, (3) transparency, (4) sustainability, and (5) quality; should be reflected in tourism development to make tourist destinations "a better place for people to live in and a better place for to visit". As protection and preservation of natural resources, virginity of a place, and cultural heritages of its people have taken the centre stage in tourism promotion at this moment, the world has also started admiring the "Responsible Tourism" approach as a fresh air.

Successful Responsible Tourism Models / Initiatives around the World – A Few Examples

Responsible Tourism approach mainly advocates for three types of responsibilities. These are: (1) Responsibility to the environment through sustainable resource use; (2) Responsibility to the economic development of local community members by increasing opportunities for them to participate in the tourism industry, and (3) Responsibility to the visitors through ensuring their safety and security while travelling - those altogether leads to sustainable tourism development. Responsible Tourism recently has got a boost at several destinations around the world, thanks to the involvement of leading non-profit organizations. Many tourist destinations have already benefited greatly as a result of the inclusion of Responsible Tourism (RT) values in their tourism agenda. A few such examples are as follow:

[1] **Bhutan:** Because of its unique tourism activities, Bhutan has firmly established itself as one of the world's most responsible and sustainable tourism destinations. Bhutan's attempt to maintain its culture through tourism is one of its distinguishing features. Every visitor to Bhutan is required to pay a daily fee. All hotels, home-stays, transportation, meals, and guides are included in this fee. 30% of this fee goes to environmental protection, community development, and community-based tourism programs where families welcome visitors during their stay in this country. This form of tariffed payment system assures that all tourism participants get a fair and living wage, while also maintaining a high standard for all visitors to the country. It also helps protect their natural environment, with little social impact and an emphasis on culture.

[2] **Kerala, India:** Kerala is the state that is leading the way in terms of developing RT routes. Some of these destinations are Kumarakom, Wayanad, and Kovalam. Each of these locations features the 'Village Life Experience'. In these destinations, tourists may go bow-and-arrow fishing, or take a rural boat ride to witness toddy tappers at work. In the villages of Kumarakom, Wayanad, and Kovalam, the villagers use the coconut tree's leaves to thatch roofs and make brooms, they use the shell to make card and soap holders, as well as, the fruits are turned into oil. These places also have a handful of RT approved hotels.

[4] **Luxembourg:** Luxembourg is leading the way for European countries in terms of encouraging eco-travel and responsible tourism. One of these eco-travel projects is an amazing and free public transportation system, which makes Luxembourg the world's first country to do so. In addition, this country has a well-developed system of bike lanes, allowing the tourists to lessen their carbon footprint while visiting this country.

[5] **Luang Prabang, Laos:** In recent years, Laos has seen a substantial increase in the amount of effort put into responsible tourism. Not only for tourists, but also for the region's eco-development and local inhabitants, the emphasis is genuine. One of the regions that will receive increasing attention is Luang Prabang, which is quickly becoming a top responsible tourism destination in Southeast Asia. Luang Prabang, as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has been able to create laws and procedures to accommodate the increased tourist numbers. Luang Prabang has made a concerted effort to eliminate plastic waste. Every public restroom provides cloth towels instead of tissue papers. In most hotels, little plastic shampoo bottles have been replaced with refillable ceramic bottles, and glass bottles have replaced plastic bottles for drinking water. Many hotels and small businesses encourage organic farming and often grow their own food. The government has even built water stations to encourage tourists to refill bottles rather than buy new ones, with all plastic packaging being recycled after each use.

Conclusion

Responsible tourism is individual and collective decisions about how we understand and execute sustainable tourism practices at tourism destinations. It's all about implementing effective tourism management practices that maximize the benefit of tourism; and at the same time, minimizes the cost to the destinations. The awareness and acceptance of various obligations carried out by tourism stakeholders towards any tourist destination and its inhabitants is therefore, important for the success of Responsible Tourism practices at tourist destinations.

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It would not have been easy to make sure all of it works well without the efforts of our team of dedicated members. They worked hard for the magazine from cover to cover, quite literally, but now that it is all done, all the hard work seems to be worth it. We hope to get better and better with every edition as we would create a fusion of new ideas and experiments to keep our readers excited and on their toes. Innovation is the key, and our focus is only on bringing new ideas to build on the foundation we lay through this magazine.

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